

Southwest Resource Advisory Council
Friday, March 5, 2010
Devil's Thumb Golf Course
Delta, CO 81416

MEETING MINUTES

ATTENDEES

Resource Advisory Council Members

Jevin Croteau, Category 1	Andrew Gulliford, Category 2	Jim Cochran, Category 3
Ken Emory, Category 1	Peter Mueller, Category 2	William Ela, Category 3
Al Heaton, Category 1	Andrea Robinsong, Category 2	Alan Staehle, Category 3
Kathy Welt, Category 1	Dan Morse, Category 2	Tony Gurzick, Category 3
		Gerald Koppenhafer, Category 3

Not present: Jim Young, Category 1; Wally White, Category 2

BLM/FS Staff

Lori Armstrong, BLM, Manager, Southwest District	Barb Sharrow, BLM, Manager, Uncompahgre Field Office
Bill Dunkelberger, BLM/FS, Associate Center Manager, San Juan Public Land Center	Brian St. George, BLM, Manager, Gunnison Field Office
Erin Curtis, BLM, Public Affairs Officer	Jana Moe, BLM, Administrative Assistant, Uncompahgre Field Office
Katie Stevens, Interim Manager, Dominguez-Escalante NCA	

Visitors

	Representing	City/Town
John Whitney	Congressman Salazar	Durango
Maureen Briggs	Public	Montrose
Bill Gleason	Public	Montrose
Bruce Hovde	Delta County Commissioner	Delta County

Opening Remarks from Designated Federal Officer (DFO) and RAC Chair

The meeting was called to order by RAC chair Kathy Welt at 9:06 a.m.

The agenda for the day was reviewed and approved as is.

The minutes of last two meetings (May and August 2009), as received by email, were approved. Motion to approve made by Bill Ela, second by Andy Gulliford.

Designated Federal Office Report – Lori Armstrong

- Helen Hankins is the new Colorado State Director. She is a geologist by training, and was the associate State Director in Arizona before moving to Colorado.
- Helen will be meeting with the Colorado Leadership team next week.
- Interviews for the replacement of Dave Hunsaker, former Associate State Director (retired) have been completed, hope to have a decision next week.
- Wants to get district system up and running
- Greater Sage Grouse announcement expected this morning (not Gunnison Sage Grouse)
- BLM budget \$8,000,000 increase for FY 2010. Emphasis on new energy frontier, youth programs, climate and treasured landscapes. Some budget areas took a hit including challenge cost sharing and planning. \$1.1 billion budget for BLM.

Round table introductions were made, including newest RAC member Peter Mueller. Members present constitute a quorum.

Gunnison Geothermal Lease Nomination - Brian St George

Gunnison Field Office (GFO) has received a nomination for a competitive geothermal lease for approximately 4,986 acres of federal mineral estate in the Wuanita Hot Springs area north of Highway 50, east of Gunnison. There is BLM surface, Forest Service surface and small area of private surface.

Two EAs will be prepared, one for BLM, one for Forest Service lands. On March 11 there will be an initial public meeting by BLM/FS. Public meeting will be educational on geothermal and start the scoping period.

See handout for additional notes.

Dominguez – Escalante NCA - Katie Stevens

- Introduction of Katie Stevens as interim manager through planning effort
- A railroad right-of-way feasibility study is underway to determine how to get people safely across the railroad tracks at the Bridgeport trailhead. They are looking at trailhead redesign, and options for pedestrians to go over or under the railroad tracks.
- Land swaps with DOW in Escalante Canyon could happen, could include historic structures.

Nomination period for the Dominguez-Escalante Resource Advisory Council will be reopened.

Dolores River Project – Peter Mueller

Peter Mueller provided an update on the Dolores River Project.

- Is the tamarisk beetle working? It is doing something, reducing tamarisk, but it is not mitigating the fire hazard or dealing with other invasive species.
- The Dolores River Project receives funding through the Packard Foundation, BLM, Walton Family Foundation, CO Water Conservation Board, Marathon Oil, and The Nature Conservancy.

Resolutions

The RAC discussed resolutions that were drafted at the “Super RAC” meeting in February 2009.

Air Quality Resolution Review

- Super RAC agreed to jointly create resolutions.
- Kathy Welt was assigned to be on the air quality resolution working group – the group never met.
- The NW RAC signed its own version of the air quality resolution.
- Alan Staehle move to adopt the NW RAC's version of the air quality resolution. Andy Gulliford seconded the motion.
- The motion was then withdrawn by Staehle and Gulliford to consider some modifications.
- The resolution was tabled for further discussion.

BLM's Social Science Capabilities Resolution

- Alan Staehle moved to adopt the NW RAC resolution on BLM's Social Science Capabilities. Dan Morse seconded the motion with the exception of correcting a typo.
- The motion was passed by all.

News Update on Sage Grouse

The US Fish and Wildlife Service has determined that protection of the Greater Sage Grouse is warranted, but precluded for now. There is not enough money available to manage all the species which may be more endangered. Based on today's announcement, the Greater Sage Grouse is not listed as threatened or endangered at this time (Federally)

- There are no Greater Sage Grouse in this RAC area.
- For the Gunnison Sage Grouse, no decision will be made until Sept 15, 2010.

Gunnison Sage Grouse Research Proposal – What is the impact of livestock grazing on Gunnison Sage Grouse?

Brian St. George provided an update on the research proposal. See handout for further information.

Lunch Break

Meeting called back to order at 1:13 p.m.

Modified Air Quality Resolution Adopted

- Motion to accept made by Alan Staehle, second by Andy Gulliford
- Motion passed by all
- Please send copies to FR/NW RAC

UFO RAC Sub-Group for Resource Management Plan Revision

After reviewing nominations, Barb Sharrow, UFO manager, recommended seven people to serve on the advisory group. RAC members received a summary copy of all the nominees plus Barb's recommendation before the meeting. The group agreed that three liaisons from the SW RAC need to be appointed to the sub-group as well.

- A motion was made by Andrea Robinsong to accept Barb's nominations. Ken Emory seconded the motion.

- After discussion, the motion was amended (by Robinson) to include SW RAC members Bill Ela and Peter Mueller as liaisons, as part of the sub-group motion. Seconded by Emory.
- Motion passed with one abstaining (Heaton)
- Motion made by Andrea Robinson to rescind and replace previous motion which would now include Jim Young (or Al Heaton) as a third SW RAC member liaison. Motion seconded by Al Heaton.
- Motion passed by all.
- A request was made to keep the SW RAC in the loop for communications with sub-group members.

Field Manager Reports

Gunnison Field Office, Brian St. George

- See attached Field Manager report
- Candidate Conservation Agreement – how will the management agency manage the listed species
 - Candidate Conservation Assurance (CCA)
 - BLM has agreed to develop a CCA for the Gunnison Sage Grouse in the Gunnison Basin
- The Final Upper Gunnison Basin Travel Management Plan will be available for public review in mid-April. Then final decision which will be appealable. The plan was combined with Forest Service, but two separate decisions are made.
- Deadline April 2 for Mt. Emmons molybdenum mine. 33 years in the works, company has filed for conditional water right, must file plan of operations to maintain conditional right. Show necessary steps for mine development
- Update on Trout Unlimited's Alpine Loop Campaign
 - TU's goal is to get a special designation for the loop. TU would like an NCA. Conflict between OHV use and NCA designation. Limit motorized use to designated roads and trails + wilderness designation in existing WSAs. No formal BLM position at this time.
 - Ken Emory stated that the OHV community does not support any designation. Don't trust TU and think present management is appropriate. Wants to see TU plan in writing.
 - Gulliford – environmental community discouraged by slow movement on WSAs in the area, hopefully this would finalize status of WSAs.
 - Bill Dunkelberger - BLM has found several (Red Cloud and Handie's) but not all WSA's suitable, but has not recommended them to Congress for wilderness designation.
 - Multiple groups are at the table – good discussions can happen (Staehle). NCA designations can be custom written to address issues.
 - Gulliford - Many of the impacts in the area are not motorized – hiker trails braided etc.
- Staffing update, Arden Anderson retired. Art Hayes retired. Death of Sandy Hayes on Dec. 28. Big hole in office. Hired 6 new employees in time in office. (1/4 of staff). Rebuilding!!

- Looking at relocating – pursuing options

PUBLIC COMMENT:

John Whitney:

- DeGette Wilderness Bill
 - The bill has been introduced every year for about 10 years, Salazar does not support. Hearing coming up, Salazar will testify against. Thursday 11 am eastern (next week).
 - Bill hasn't been vetted well in local communities
 - Salazar believes wilderness should come from the ground up.
 - Has been through sub-committee.
 - Existing mineral leases in some areas concern to lease holder
 - Ditches and reservoirs within boundaries
 - Motorized/Mechanized trails within boundaries
 - Adjoins private property and includes existing grazing leases
 - We don't anticipate this moving forward this year.
 - DeGette bill does not have senate co-sponsor
 - Salazar's San Juan wilderness bill we expect to move forward. Should be ready for a hearing in a month or so. Has already been heard in subcommittee. BLM and USFS testified in favor of the bill.
 - Would RAC be interested in making resolution to support? (Emory) Group decided against.
 - Key thing is what kind of process areas have before they are designated wilderness. Rep. Salazar believes there should be a very thorough process that engages the local constituencies. Consensus from local communities that are most affected.

Field Manager Reports Continued

Uncompahgre Field Office, Barb Sharrow

- See attached Field Manager Report
- We have already received lots of public comments on the Resource Management Plan Revision. Had a good series of scoping meetings and Recreation Focus Meetings. Economic meetings will start next week.
- Dry Creek Travel Management Plan – presently under appeal. A stay would limit any implementation, if a stay is granted expect 6 months to 3 years to resolve with IBLA.
- UFO Travel Management Plan – out for public protest.

Additional Discussion on potential RAC resolution on wilderness bills:

- Alan Staehle asked if the group would consider language to the effect of - In relation to the CO wilderness, the RAC recommends that well studied bills be supported
- Tony Gurzick would like to hear both sides of the story before developing resolution
- Consideration of some generic language that would guide BLM on land management decisions including wilderness was tabled to future meeting.

SJPLC, Bill Dunkelberger

- See attached Field Manager report

- Elk Conservationist of the year – Kathy Nickell
- Perin's Peak Resolution: state office will defer leasing of parcels within the area until completion of plan
- Updates provided on Dolores Public Lands Office Potash Proposal as well as the Tamarisk Coalition/Dolores River Dialogue (handout)
- Supplement to EIS in Paradox Valley, hope to release final draft to public in July 2010.
- Stimulus projects underway. No projects are actually complete yet. Some structural improvements to the heritage center are still being engineered.

From the Chair and DFO

- Expiring RAC Terms end Aug 20, 2010 for Croteau, Young, Robinsong, Ela and Staehle
- Future Meeting Schedule
 - June 3-4, Dolores, meet at Heritage Center. Possible Dolores River trip
 - August 12-13, Gunnison, possible geothermal tour
 - October 7-8, Ridgway, Possible field trip ideas include Standard Metal Claims, San Miguel River, Orvis Hot Springs

Possible agenda topics for future meeting:

- Geothermal
- Gunnison Travel Plan
- Biomass Boiler at Western State
- Science
- Alpine loop update – later this year
- Update on SJPLC oil and gas supplement (May)
- DeGette Wilderness bill briefing
- WSAs in SWRAC – BLM recommendations
- New solar proposals?

Motion to adjourn by Tony Gurzick at 4:05 p.m. Second by Dan Morse. Motion passed, meeting adjourned.